



CHESS VALLEY MALE VOICE CHOIR



25th Anniversary
1993 - 2018

Introduction

In this, the choir's 25th season, the Committee decided to extend the celebration across all of our concerts, and this brochure draws on the memories and archives of those who have been involved both from the early days and more recently.

Community choirs are in vogue and with the television work of Gareth Malone and others there is a focus on the health, social and psychological benefits of singing in any type of choir. We are very much a Male Voice Choir and different in composition to Community Choirs. In the late 19th century Male Voice Choirs became popular with the miners of South Wales and the heritage continues to this day.



We sing a wide range of styles, using music from our extensive library which we update regularly with more pieces. As part of the preparations for our 25th season we voted for the piece of music that was most liked and Eric Whitacre's "Seal Lullaby" came top of the poll. This piece is very different from Welsh hymns and the vote confirms our wide repertoire and the pleasure members derive from it.

In keeping with our founder members' aims, the CVMVC also plays an active part in supporting various local charities, in encouraging young musical talent, and has travelled widely, in this country and in Europe.

We have some of the founder members still singing with the choir, after 25 years. There is a wide range of ages, from the early 50s to the mid 80s and, as many sing with us until they can no longer do so for health reasons or on leaving the area, the choir represents longevity. The choir continues to attract new members and though we doubt many of us will be here to celebrate our 50th anniversary there is confidence that the choir will still be going strongly in 2043.

Finally, our thanks to the team who produced this brochure, especially John Ramsbottom, Graham Rudge and Terry Cherrill.

Jeremy Wynnman

Chairman, Chess Valley Male Voice Choir

Chess Valley Male Voice Choir

How It All Began ...

Male Voice Choir enthusiast, Geoff Faulkner, moved to Chesham in 1987, and joined the Chorleywood Choral Society, but also commuted to Aldershot every week to continue singing with the Rushmoor MVC, (a 90-mile round trip!). When

circumstances changed, and he was no longer able to make the journey, to use his words, *"Once you're smitten with Male Voice Choirs, there's no giving it up. So finally, I decided to try and start a local one, easily said, but not so easily done."*



had never conducted a Male Voice Choir and if they could get a hall with suitable acoustics, a well-tuned piano, and a good accompanist, she could be interested. A visit to a Rushmoor MVC concert in Aldershot, discussing the ideas with Colin Wilson the MD of that Choir, Sheila was enthused and the seed was

planted! Geoff negotiated the use of the Trinity Baptist Church hall in Chesham, including a reasonable piano. Sheila finally managed to persuade Helen Cooke, a wonderful musician and pianist, to agree to be the accompanist.

This took over a year and a lot of advertising, bullying, and persuasion to try to get members. The first members were drawn from Chesham Methodist Church where Ken Barrow, (pictured) a former member of the renowned Honley

MVC, was inspirational and enthusiastic and managed to convince about eight men from that Church to join (some are still with us). When Roger Smith persuaded several men from the Chorleywood Choral Society to join, there was the nucleus of a choir. Geoff's wife suggested the name Chess Valley as it hinted at Welsh Male Voice Choirs.

Geoff managed to raise £300 from relations to purchase music from Oldham Male Voice Choir who were closing down. So, with singers, a Musical Director, an accompanist, a home base, and a name, the Chess Valley Male Voice Choir was in business. There were 24 men at the inaugural meeting on September

21st, 1993. By the December 1994, following a lot of advertising, bullying, and persuasion, the numbers doubled.

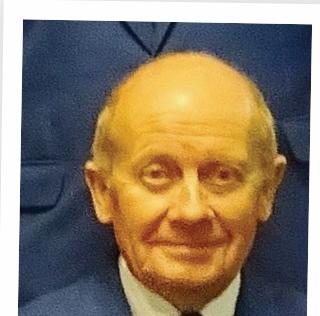
Geoff recalls that *"Some had no idea what 'part' they sang, but Sheila's experience finally got us into some sort of musical order. Through her enthusiasm, patience and musical skills, we were soon sounding more like a Male Voice Choir and it wasn't too long before we gave our first performance to friends and families. I well remember Sheila being extremely nervous, as her father had agreed to attend and was himself a choir singer. Our first concert was fantastic from both audience and choir alike and I know we were all on a high at the party we held afterwards."*



From there, and under Sheila's expertise, the choir, with a great deal of trepidation, entered a local Musical Festival and won, not only an award, but praise from the former registrar at the Royal Academy of Music, *"who couldn't believe we had only been singing about four or five months."* What an accolade and reward for Sheila and the lads of the choir.

Owing to ill health and having to give up work, Geoff had to reluctantly leave 'his' choir and move away in 1995. He had the satisfaction that Chess Valley MVC was a firmly established Male Voice Choir - a credit to his vision and energy, plus the hard work of the officers and men of the choir. Moving to Dorset, Geoff joined the Casterbridge Male Voice Choir and served on their committee for 18 years, until finally hanging up his pen as their Secretary last year. He now just enjoys singing with the second Basses.

In a letter to Geoff, Mike Armstrong, CVMVC Chairman for 17 years, spoke for the entire choir:



"You were sorely missed when you left, and I was determined to carry on your legacy, which you can be rightly proud of. The choir is a major part of my life and many of us have forged lasting friendships through it, all thanks to you and your vision and enthusiasm."



The First 10 Years

Although Sheila Cornall came from a part of the country where there wasn't really a strong tradition of this particular type of choir she had always enjoyed listening to the rousing sounds of Male Voice Choirs. She feels that her parents were responsible for her interest. Both of them enjoyed and sang choral music, and she remembers attending Male Voice Choir concerts as a youngster when on holiday in Wales. Her father frequently talked about, and listened to, the Glasgow Orpheus Male Voice Choir, a very fine choir, whose Director of Music, Hugh Robertson, was not only a wonderful conductor, composer and arranger, but also one of her father's patients. (**"And not always an 'easy' one!"**)

Therefore, when Geoff Faulkner approached her to become the conductor of a Male Voice Choir, based in Chesham, Sheila was excited at the prospect of developing such a choir!

Sheila recalls the feeling as the first rehearsal approached - a mixture of anxiety, excitement and trepidation. Would anybody turn up? Would they be able to sing? Could they read music? A tenor or a bass? Would it be a waste of time and effort? 'Oh ye of little faith!'

"By the end of our first rehearsal, Chess Valley Male Voice Choir had been born, singing in harmony and already developing a sense of togetherness which has remained a characteristic of the choir throughout its 25 years!"

CVMVC MEMBERS AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING ON 21st SEP 1993		
Ackerman	Stuart	b2
Barrow	Ken	t1
Blythe	David	b1
Bowen	Lyn	t1
Brown	Peter	t1
Brum	Les	t1
Davies	Elwyn	t2
De Boos	David	b1
Faulkner	Geoff	b2
Flower	Doug	t2
Furze	Mike	b2
Gaskin	Ray	b2
Glover	Terry	b1
Howell	Glyn	b1
Lines	Stuart	?
McLarty	Angus	b2
Nicholson	Don	t1
Rew	Brian	t1
Smith	Roger	b2
Spiller	Les	b1
Tearall	Bill	b2
Tedd	Vic	t1
Threadgold	David	b1
Roberts	Alan	
Cornall	Sheila	MD
Cooke	Helen	Acc

24 singers + Sheila & Helen

Over the following weeks, as the repertoire and numbers increased, it was decided it was time to go public and give a concert in Broadway Baptist Church. Very traditional Male Voice Choir music, great Welsh hymns, some folk songs, and Christmas carols. Sheila's daughter, Fiona Cornall, a young violinist, was CVMVC's first soloist, and the first of many young performers who have benefitted from the support of the choir in gaining invaluable platform experience. In addition, accompanist Helen Cooke also performed some vocal solos accompanied by Sheila! The audience was hugely appreciative, and with warm applause, positive reviews, CVMVC was up and running!!!

Encouraged by the reaction of the audience, and by their resulting new found confidence, the choir entered the Adult Choir section in the Chesham Arts Festival the following February. The adjudicator, Noel Cox, an eminent musician and former registrar at the

Royal Academy of Music, couldn't believe that the choir had only been together for five months such was the high standard we had reached! The choir was awarded an honours certificate! This was also the start CVMVC's long standing association with the Arts Festival.

For Sheila, the next engagement was highly emotionally charged. Her father had attended the very first concert, hearing his granddaughter playing and listening to the newly formed Male Voice Choir. A few days after the Festival, the choir sang at his funeral - something he himself had requested, having heard the choir at its first concert. The family were very moved at the service and made a donation to the choir in his memory which was used to design and purchase the choir ties, the first step towards a uniform.

Gradually the choir developed a programme of concerts performed in regular venues locally, and further afield. The annual Spring Concert was held in the Elgiva in Chesham.

Soloists were local performers, some professionals, but more often young students heard at Chesham Arts Festival, students from local schools in Chesham, Amersham and High Wycombe, and from the Purcell School. In addition, CVMVC performed with other groups on a regular basis, sharing concerts with choirs such as Luton, Casterbridge, Wycombe Orpheus Male Voice Choirs, the Wycombe High School Chamber Choir, and the Amersham Band.

Having received such positive feedback on home ground, the choir decided to undertake tours to mainland Europe – to Belgium, Prague and Bensheim, where they helped celebrate the 25th anniversary of Amersham's twin town link.



Sadly the choir lost its two founders fairly early on. Ken Barrow passed away and Geoff Faulkner moved to Dorset. Sheila asserts **"Without them, I doubt whether the choir would have been formed - we owe them a great deal."**

Over the first few years, the members of the choir had established friendships not only amongst themselves but also with their families and other supporters, who often met at concerts and social events. Singing for family events, weddings, celebrations, thanksgiving services - choir members would be there to sing and support whenever they could. The first major change in the team came when accompanist,



Helen Cooke, decided to take a break, as she wanted to devote more time to her other musical interests. We were extremely fortunate to be joined by Joan Thackray who very quickly established herself as a fine accompanist to the choir.

And so, the Chess Valley Male Voice Choir, its members immaculate in their blue blazers with custom designed badges and ties, took their place on concert platforms at home and abroad. The repertoire explored the extensive range of genres and styles associated with Male Voice Choirs.

The Next 10 Years

David's comments on his appointment in 2003: "*It was a surprise, a pleasure and a privilege to be invited to become the Choir's Musical Director. Thanks to Sheila, the Chess Valley Male Voice Choir was well established as an accomplished and versatile element of Chesham and area's musical life.*"

David embraced the choir's programme - a substantial workload of concerts locally and further afield. The enthusiasm was harnessed and steered by a resourceful, energetic

and hard-working committee, who clearly had the aim of developing the choir's own musical and social experiences alongside raising significant funds for charities. The choir has been particularly fortunate that, since its very early days, with Roger Smith, followed by Mike Armstrong

as Chairmen, Les Brum

and Tony Usher, Secretaries, and Brian Long, Treasurer, the backbone of what was a well-run and, after some time, an experienced committee that remained in these positions for nearly two decades.

Following a serendipitous one-off visit to sing in Coventry cathedral, the choir decided to begin a systematic programme of singing in other cathedral cities which could be accessed in a day trip from Chesham, performing around midday. There are a surprising number, including Ely (where the choir sang in the super-resonant Lady Chapel), Tewkesbury, Litchfield, Winchester, Wells, St Albans, and Portsmouth.

Such was the delight we found in these acoustics that tours of more distant regions of the country were organised, also based on one or more cathedrals. On the Wakefield and Ripon tour, we met up with the Honley Male Voice Choir for a joint concert. David Cooke felt that the day trips and tours abroad "*helped to develop the choir as a social as well as a singing unit, and we always toured with a marvellous entourage of supporters.*" and he has "*vivid memories of CVMVC singing beautifully during a service from the cramped and vertiginous organ loft high up in Krakow's Mariacki Church; singing 'Holy, holy, holy' deep underground in a salt mine; and being taken in various horse-drawn vehicles to the 15th Anniversary dinner in Zakopane.*"

During those first ten years thousands of pounds were raised for charities.

However, for Sheila, it was time to step aside. Family commitments and her job as Director of Music at Wycombe High School were both very demanding and she needed a break from the choir. In her successor, Sheila felt "*How extremely fortunate the choir was to be able to appoint David Cooke as the choir's second conductor!*"

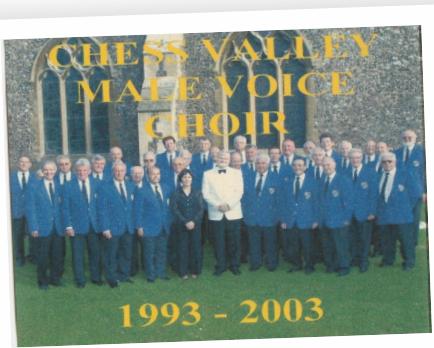
The choir continued to help promote young local soloists by offering them performing slots in our concerts, and was particularly fortunate to have ongoing contact with Sheila, who several times brought her superb Wycombe High School Chamber Choir to take part in our concerts, with the School also providing talented guest soloists.

David recalls that "*the choir's repertoire expanded- the traditional Male Voice Choir repertoire was ever available. Climbin' up the Mountain retained its energy and popularity to contrast with the grandeur of Gwahoddiad and Llanfair, along with folksong settings, spirituals and songs from the shows. But such pieces as Howard Goodall's 'The Lord is my Shepherd', Karl Jenkins' 'Praise' and Faure's 'Cantique de Jean Racine', were added. With the choir's never-failing willingness to tackle the more unusual (or at least with their well-disguised forbearance), the choir even ventured into the 16th Century with Thomas Tallis' 'If ye love me'. A performance of which in Ely Cathedral is fondly lodged in my memory.*"

In 2010 by joining forces with two mixed voice choirs - the Damon Singers and the Hemel Hempstead Singers - for a concert in St Peter's, Berkhamsted of Widor's Mass for Two Choirs (one of them a male voice choir) and two Organs, and also a 'Sanctus' by Giovanni Gabrieli for three separate choirs.

The choir also commissioned 'My Chiltern Home', authored and composed by Chairman, Mike Armstrong, and arranged by David Cooke, which became something akin to a Choir Anthem. And 'Schneewalzer', complete with swaying of various intensities and direction, turned into a Christmas concert fixture.

At the start of this period, Joan Thackray was the choir's admired accompanist. When Joan left, CVMVC were fortunate to re-engage Helen Cooke in that role. Helen stayed with CVMVC until 2013 when she and David felt it was time to retire from the choir with "*so many happy memories.*" At the choir's 20th Anniversary Dinner that year at which they presented David with a "much cherished baton" in its own special wooden case.



The Last Five Years

David's decision happily coincided with Sheila's retirement from Wycombe High School, where she had won the prestigious Classic FM Senior School Teacher of the Year award, and she was delighted when Mike Armstrong, asked her to return to conduct the choir again.

Sheila felt that "**the choir had prospered under David's leadership and he had introduced new ideas into the repertoire and the concert schedule. However, we also needed to appoint another accompanist and yet again, we struck gold! Becky Izard is not only a great accompanist but she is a fantastic singer herself who has frequently sung at our concerts at home and on tour**". Becky also takes sectional rehearsals – a huge gain in productive rehearsal time and, in the additional attention to detail, a great help to Sheila in improving the choir's performance.

Still Singing Strongly.....

In addition to Sheila, there are five active choir members from the first year of CVMVC's foundation. From L to R;

Roger Smith - who, as a co-member of Chorleywood Choral Society with Geoff Faulkner, on registering his interest in forming a Male Voice Choir, was told "**Great - you can be Chairman!**"

Tony Usher – whose wife saw the advertisement for the launch of a Male Voice Choir, and suggested he tried it. At the time, Tony was singing with the Chesham Barbershop Group. Tony was Choir Secretary for many years.

John Drinkwater – a choir member at the same church as Ken Barrow. At the time John was singing with Wembley Operatic Society

Jim Menary - another of Ken Barrow's church choir colleagues, who was persuaded to "**join the cause.**"

Mike Armstrong - a member of Amersham Choral Society, Mike had heard that a Male Voice Choir had been formed, and enjoyed a very positive first meeting with Geoff Faulkner. Mike was Chairman for 17 years.

The choir has continued to perform in a variety of venues, and go on tour - stunning Cathedrals and a Basilica when CVMVC went to France; nearer home, Lincoln Cathedral, Southwell and Beverley Minsters. Midday concerts in Bath Abbey in 2016 and scheduled for Gloucester Cathedral in 2019 continue the tradition of performing in new and exciting locations.

In addition, the choir sings for its tea every summer, at Great Missenden cream tea afternoons.

Partnerships continue with the Amersham Band and with Mark Armstrong, whose virtuosic trumpet playing has stunned us all at the 'Six of the Best' concerts. Young musicians, as young as seven, continue to amaze us with their talent! Many of those who appeared at concerts in earlier years have gone on to become professional musicians.

Raising money for charities at our concerts has continued and over the past few years CVMVC have contributed funds to Chiltern Music Therapy at most of the concerts. More recently, the choir performed a very successful concert in Wendover, in aid of Lindengate which provides therapy through gardening.

The members, wives and partners continue to forge friendships.

New members have been welcomed and farewell said to others, some of whom have re located. Sadly some have passed away and CVMVC has sung at their funeral services, and the contributions they have all made has not been forgotten!

"Singing is good for you in so many different ways, so come along and join CVMVC so you can find out for yourselves! Your choir needs you!"



The Team Today...

Musical Director - Sheila Cornall

Sheila has been involved with CVMVC from the outset as Musical Director for the first ten years. However, the demands of family commitments and her job as Director of Music

at Wycombe High School resulted in a lessening of her involvement with CVMVC, whilst retaining the role of President. David Cooke's decision to step down happily coincided with Sheila's retirement from Wycombe High School, when she was approached to take up the baton again.



Sheila Cornall received her early musical training in Lincoln before studying at the University of Manchester and the Royal Northern College of Music. For 16 years Sheila was Director of Music at Wycombe High School, a post from which she retired in 2013. She was recently appointed Chorus Director of Slough Philharmonic Choir and has also been asked to return to WHS to conduct the Wycombe High Voices. In addition she conducts an orchestra

at the Chiltern Music Academy and accompanies singers and instrumentalists at festivals and in exams. In 2011 Sheila won the Classic FM Secondary School Music Teacher of the Year award.

Accompanist - Rebecca Izard:

Rebecca was a member of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain before studying singing and piano at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. After building a career as a singer and teacher, she completed an MA in music education at Trinity College of Music and became Head of Performing Arts at Gateway School in Great Missenden where she is now also Head of Staff.



At Gateway, their Chamber Choir has sung at the Royal Festival Hall as finalists in the Barnardo's National Choral Competition for the past two years. Rebecca is the Musical Director of the Military Wives Choir, at RAF Halton, with whom she has performed at venues such as the Imperial War Museum. She has also taken part in conducting workshops with Gareth Malone and Amy Bebbington. Rebecca also appears as a guest soloist in many of their concerts.

... And Yesteryear

David Cooke

Musical Director from 2002 until 2013, studied music at Liverpool and Oxford Universities, with a special interest in the early English keyboard repertoire. He was also Artistic & Musical Director of Chantrye, a group devoted to presenting aspects of medieval life to modern audiences; and of the Chiltern Hundreds Bach Choir and Chorleywood Chamber Orchestra, specialising in the liturgical performance of Church music. David was also involved in supervising the music for several stage productions and operas. Currently David is Musical

Director of the Wycombe Philharmonic Choir, and of the Damon Singers, a Chamber Choir based in Chesham.



Helen Cooke

Accompanist to CVMVC from its formation until 1999, and from 2007 to 2013. After taking her music degree, Helen studied piano and harpsichord at the Royal Academy of Music. Helen is a regular accompanist to local choirs and music exam candidates. She was a member of the Wooburn Singers and the BBC Symphony Chorus for many years, and now sings with the Damon Singers and the Chiltern Chamber Choir.



Joan Thackray

Accompanist from 1999 when she succeeded Helen Cooke until 2007. A graduate of Reading University, Joan was very active in accompanying choirs in the Reading area. Re-reading her diary entry after the first session with CVMVC, Joan noted her first impressions; "**the choir sounded well balanced, and Sheila would be good to work with**". Choir programmes during her time with CVMVC make special reference to her "**phenomenal patience!!**"



CVMVC in the Community...

Charities' Support

One of Geoff Faulkner's aims in setting up the new choir, was that concerts should be held for local charities "**You are doing something for someone, without wanting anything back yourself**", and one of the earliest concerts at the Elgiva Hall in June 1995, raised over £1000 for the Diabetic clinic at Amersham Hospital.

Beneficiaries from the early concerts, whether by CVMVC alone, in conjunction with other choirs and/or the Amersham Band, were various, but most had a local connection- The 61 Youth Club, Novi Most, a Chesham based support for children from Bosnia, Star and Garter Homes, and Naomi House, a children's hospice in Winchester.



By the choir's 10th year, over £15,000 had been raised for hospices, children's charities and other good causes. Moving into its second decade, children in the Philippines, the Pepper Foundation, St Mary's Church Amersham, Kings Church and Water in Africa were early beneficiaries, but Chesham based 'Shed in the Park' bringing Performing Arts to children who otherwise might be neglected by society, was a template for many of the future donations. Heritage House School, helping children with learning difficulties became a regular recipient of funds raised in solo or joint concerts. Amersham Free Church, the Hospice of St Francis, and the South Bucks Hospice, also benefited.



Over its 25 years, in joint or solo concerts, the choir has raised over £50,000, increasingly for charities that use Music to aid the well-being of their clients. Chiltern Music Therapy (CMT) has been one such beneficiary. Their thanks speak for many other causes that CVMVC has helped.



In a letter of thanks to the choir, CMT Director, Katie Schuster, describes the work carried out by CMT: "Chess Valley Male Voice Choir has kindly supported Chiltern Music Therapy for over four years. Our shared appreciation of the powerful influence that music can have within the community has ensured a strong relationship between the two organisations. CVMVC have been able to raise over £3,500 over the years through their concerts and we are incredibly grateful of their generosity and the support of those that attend their brilliant concerts.

At Chiltern, we provide Music Therapy sessions to people of all ages and needs. Everyone that approaches

us for Music Therapy input is provided with an assessment by one of our qualified Music Therapists. From there it is then decided whether ongoing music therapy is required or whether another form of musical input would be beneficial. We are incredibly proud of this model because whilst we know that not everyone needs Music Therapy, we know how important music can be. Our Community Music scheme enables people to access music and singing groups in a relaxed and fun environment. We also provide one to one sessions and DJ and Music Tech sessions under this scheme.

We would sincerely like to thank CVMVC for their continued support of Chiltern and our clients, and wish them all the best for their next 25 years!"



Chesham Arts Festival



One of the choir's earliest performances was in the Chesham Arts Festival of 1994 when, six months after its formation, CVMVC was a class winner with Honours in the Adult Choir section. The choir continued to perform in the festival for several years with continued success, and increasingly became involved in the support of the organisers during the festival week.

The festival also provided the choir the opportunity to meet another of its founders' aims - to encourage young people, in the pursuit of musical excellence. Sheila Cornall has been on the committee for several years, and has donated two trophies to the Festival.

Since 2005, CVMVC has provided bursaries for outstanding performers, with many also having the opportunity to show their talent at one of the choir's concerts. For some, it is a new experience, and it is pleasing to see how they have progressed on return visits.

Gwen Woodstock, Honorary Secretary, writes "Chesham Arts Festival extends very Best Wishes to CVMVC and really cannot thank them enough for all their help and support over the years. In 2001, the festival moved from its original home since 1976, Chesham High School, to the Elgiva Theatre in Chesham, and stewards were desperately needed to help with the increased numbers of people entering the Festival. CVMVC very kindly stepped in and since then members of the choir have faithfully helped out during each day of the Festival making sure everything runs smoothly. We really couldn't run the Festival without "the boys in blue".

... And Wider Afield

From early days, the choir performed outside its Chesham/Amersham base, on occasions in conjunction with other choirs or bands- the Amersham Band being a regular concert partner. Guildford Cathedral, Watford, Aylesbury and High Wycombe were early venues. A highlight of those early years was the choir's appearance in April 1996 at Wycombe Swan with the Russian Red Army Band.



Sheila Cornall recalls *"We had the audacity to sing a traditional Russian song in front of them, 'Kalinka' - and they joined in, singing energetically and adding some percussion accompaniment! Our efforts were enthusiastically received by Major General Viktor Afanasiev, Chief Military Conductor, and his men!"*

'Going on tour' became part of the choir's calendar and the first was to Belgium singing in the Cloth Hall in Ypres, and at the Last Post Service at the Menin Gate, which was memorable. In 1997, the destination was Prague, with concerts in a School for the Blind and at a stunning monastery outside the city. The 2002 trip was to Amersham's German twin town, Bensheim, in the company of the Amersham Band, during the celebration of the wine harvest. Sheila Cornall remembers *"The hospitality was unbelievable - which helped produce some vintage singing from the choir!"*

For the next four years, the tours were UK based, singing at cathedrals in Leicester, Ely, Litchfield, Durham, Winchester and Hexham Abbey. The choir also sang at the Cornwall International Male Voice Choir Festival with performances at Padstow, St Ives and in the Eden Project's Bio Dome.

European tours resumed in 2008, with Krakow the destination. In his report on the trip, first bass, choir member John Poston, recalls concerts at two lovely churches, in the mountain resort of Zakopane, and singing in the largest salt mine chapel in the world (pictured), sculpted by the miners' out of the salt rock.



In preparation for the visit, the choir had added a Polish medley of polonaise, polka, and love songs to its repertoire. The local audiences loved it!

Wells, Norwich, St Albans, Wakefield and Ripon were the locations for the next two years' tours, returning to Europe- to Vienna and Bratislava in 2011, and to Belgium again in 2012. With concerts at Ghent Cathedral, Antwerp, and Ostend, the choir's singing at the Last Post at the Menin Gate, after visiting World War One battlefields and cemeteries, completed an emotionally charged final day.



In 2015, France was the destination, singing at Orleans and Chartres Cathedrals, and Alencon Basilica. There are not many Male Voice Choirs in France. However we were received enthusiastically with standing ovations and resulting encores.

In 2016 the choir sang at Bath Abbey, and in the following year the tour included Lincoln Cathedral, Southwell and Beverley Minsters. Singing in magnificent buildings, with superb acoustics is an inspiration and often brings out the best in the choir. Always keen to venture into new territory, in June 2019 CVMVC will be singing in Gloucester Cathedral.

Special thanks to all who planned and organised those memorable visits; to David Cooke and Sheila Cornall for their dedication and foresight, to accompanists Helen Cooke and Becky Izard who would also double as soloist in the overseas programmes. Also huge thanks to the wives, partners and "groupies" who travel with CVMVC, give support at the concerts, share in the fun and who are fantastic company at all the social events!

Where Are They Now ?

Many of our regular followers, impressed by the performances of the young soloists, at the CVMVC concerts, must have wondered how many have gone on to continue their musical career. A brief summary of some of "our" alumni's post CVMVC progress:

Fiona Cornall (violinist)

Philharmonia Orchestra, and free-lance player with other professional orchestras

Anna Stokes (flautist)

Teacher, and freelance player, including with BBC Concert Orchestra and other professional orchestras.

Sally Pryce (harpist)

Plays with leading London orchestras, broadcasts, recitals.

Vanessa Bowers (soprano)

Professional solo engagements with choral and operatic societies and English Touring Opera.

Alexandra Caldon, nee Reid (violinist)

Britten Sinfonia, Director and leader of Cantاقorum instrumental ensemble, violin duo with her sister

Charlotte Reid (violinist)

Freelances with various London orchestras including the Philharmonia.

James Bowers (tenor)

Professional soloist with choral and operatic societies.

Mitra Alice Tham (pianist and composer)

Gives recitals in UK and Europe.

Louisa Haggerty (voice and acting)

Currently studying Music - about to embark on professional career

Heather Cossins (oboe)

at Royal Northern College of Music

Chloe Rooke (flute)

Completed degree at Oxford University, now post graduate conducting course at the Royal Academy of Music.

Megan Cave (violin) Trinity School of Music studying Piano

Scarlett Halton (voice) Guildhall School of Music

Jonah Halton (voice) Guildhall School of Music

Emily Myles (flute) Cambridge University

Fiona Haynes (voice) Royal Academy of Music

Charlotte Nohavicka (voice) just completed a Master's degree at London University.

Bethany Spicer and Claire Haynes (harpists) both studied music at University

All appreciated the opportunity, early in their careers, to try their skills in a public performance, and this is borne out by the letter from Fiona Cornall- our very first soloist:

**"Dear Members of the Chess Valley Male Voice Choir
Happy 25th Anniversary**

I can't believe that it's 25 years since the Male Voice Choir gave its very first concert in Broadway Baptist Church in Chesham – and I was there playing my violin. I'm not sure if I'm looking forward or not to watching the video of that auspicious evening, but I will no doubt be encouraged to do so very soon!

I am aware that the choir has continued to invite young instrumentalists and singers to perform in your concerts, and I know that, like me, they will have found the experience invaluable in helping to develop their musical and performance skills. Being able to share their music at a young age with an appreciative audience in a wide variety of venues is a real privilege for a young musician – at times it's difficult to find the opportunities to take a solo role in concerts.

In addition to performing at several concerts, the choir also very generously sponsored me when I was in the National Youth Orchestra – a similar gesture to the bursaries that I believe you now award at Chesham Arts Festival.

I know that many of the students who have performed at your concerts in the past have gone on to study Music at Conservatoires and Universities. Some have become professional musicians or music teachers; others have maintained their musical skills whilst branching out into other walks of life.

For me, I was never in any doubt that I wanted to be a professional violinist and play as part of one of the finest orchestras in venues all over the world with world class musicians. Indeed, I am one of the lucky ones, and just think where I was 25 years ago?

I do hope that the choir will continue to encourage and support young performers in your concerts and thank you for giving me the opportunities all those years ago!

Fiona Cornall"
No 3 Second Violin,
Philharmonia Orchestra.



Some Highlights In Pictures



We would love to see you at our concerts

2018

October 20th - 19.30
Amersham Free Church

'Sing Our All Time Favourites' – a programme selected by members of the choir with songs they have enjoyed singing over the past 25 years. Plus 3 wonderful young solo pianists!

December 15th - 19.30
Broadway Baptist Church, Chesham

Come and celebrate Christmas with some traditional Christmas music, some favourites and some new pieces too! Audience participation in carols and our traditional Snow Waltz! Plus our young soloists – a singer and a harpist

2019

March 23rd - 19.30
The Elgiva Theatre

Our 25th Anniversary celebration!
In partnership with Chesham Rotary.
Our programme will include some of the most memorable repertoire we have performed over the past 25 years

May 18th - 19.30
St. Paul's Church, Chipperfield

An Evening at the Musicals. We will perform numbers from classic musicals including 'Showboat', Les Misérables., South Pacific, Carousel and several others!

June 15th - 12.30
Gloucester Cathedral

June 30th - 14.30
St Peter & St Paul, Great Missenden
Cream Teas - Highly recommended – Music and Cake on a Sunday afternoon!

Tickets available from CVMVC : 01494 725042

Thinking about joining CVMVC?

COME ALONG TO A REHEARSAL !

We rehearse Tuesdays at 19:45 to 21.45 at the Methodist Church, Bellingdon Road, Chesham, HP5 2HA.

Car parking is available nearby at the Elgiva Theatre or Sainsbury's car park.

Contact Choir Secretary, David Fishley - dfishley@aol.com
or call 01494 763194

For more details visit the CVMVC web site: <https://chessvalleychoir.uk>